

Canada and the United States joined the OECD on December 4, 1960. Japan joined in 1964, Finland in 1969, Australia in 1971 and New Zealand in 1973, bringing the total to 24 countries. The Commission of the European Communities takes part in OECD work, and Yugoslavia participates in many activities as well.

The OECD has evolved considerably over the past three decades, moving far beyond the original mandate of the OEEC. Its work now covers the entire spectrum of economic and social issues facing national governments—agriculture, fisheries, labour, social affairs, education, science and technology, energy, environment, trade, investment and economic policy-making—as well as international economic issues.

OECD: How It Works

The OECD Council, which is the top policy-making body of the organization, is chaired by the OECD Secretary-General and consists of representatives of all member countries. Its meetings are normally attended by each country's permanent representative, who has the rank of ambassador. Once a year, an OECD Council at Ministerial Level brings together ministers of foreign affairs, finance and trade. In these meetings political leaders debate the major economic and social issues of the moment. At the end of the council, they issue a communiqué that sets out the directions they agreed to and gives political impetus to the work of the organization.

The council is served by an executive committee which is a smaller body of 14 members, with permanent membership of seven countries² and rotating membership for seven others. Three times a year, the Executive Committee in Special Session brings together senior officials in charge of international economic relations to discuss the various economic, trade and social issues in an interrelated fashion and to prepare for the year's Ministerial Meeting.

The OECD committees, numbering more than 30, plus numerous working parties and expert groups, do the detailed work of the organization in the various policy fields. Countries are represented either by members of their permanent delegation or more commonly by expert officials from their national governments.

The OECD Secretariat supports the council and the committees in their work. The Secretary-General heads a staff of 1 700 international civil servants, of whom 530 are professionals who have demonstrated excellence. They are supplemented by consultants drawn from universities, business, banks and government. Their job is to provide impartial, world-class analysis of issues, which the member countries then use as the factual base for their deliberations, and which also helps enlighten the public on policy issues. The OECD publishes a significant number of studies and generates "benchmark," internationally used statistics.

A critical working tool of the OECD is the country review process, whereby member countries as a group, relying on the analysis provided by the secretariat, review each member's policies (in such areas as macro-economic policy, technology, energy). This process of "peer review" helps member governments measure their own policies against comparable international standards.

OECD decisions are almost always taken by consensus. The objective is to arrive at policy based on a shared understanding, not the imposition of one country's views on another. Through analysis, the exchange of information and experience, and discussion, member countries become more aware of the impact of their actions on others as they search out compatible solutions and strategies. Although most agreements are informal and unpublicized, member countries, if they consider it appropriate, can and do adopt collective policy decisions through communiqués, declarations, OECD recommendations or OECD decisions, and codes of conduct. All such decisions are made public.

Canada and the Evolution of the OECD

Imbued with a strong commitment to multilateral co-operation in the wake of the Second World War, Canadian statesmen were at the forefront of efforts to build and shape the era's international institutions. It is not surprising that with the creation of the OECD, a Canadian, Mr. Donald Fleming, then Minister of Finance, was chosen to preside over the first OECD Ministerial Meeting in 1961. In succeeding years Canadian

2. Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom.